

Sewer and Water Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 10, 2025 at 1:00P.M.
Via Video Conference
(Approved)

1. Call Meeting to Order

The Sewer and Water Utilities Committee meeting was called to order by Chairperson Denise Bhirdo on Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 1:02 PM.

2. Roll Call

A roll call was conducted, with the following members present: Chairperson Denise Bhirdo and members Nate Bell, and Kurt Harff.

Staff present: Utilities Director Megan Barnes, Village Administrator Benjamin Andrews and Administrative Assistant Sarah Bertges

Others: Harlan Davis, Scott Davis, Chad Olsen

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Bell, second by Harff, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried - all ayes.

4. Approval of Minutes of the December 9, 2025 Meeting, as Published

Motion by Bell, second by Harff, to approve the meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried - all ayes.

5. Comments, Correspondence and Concerns from the Public

There were no public comments.

6. Discussion/Action Items

a. Reed Bed Presentation

Harlan Davis and Scott Davis from Constructed Wetland Groups (formerly Reed Bed Systems) presented information on reed bed systems for biosolids management. Chad Olsen from McMahon was also present for the discussion.

Harlan Davis provided historical background on the company, noting it has been in operation for 40 years with 500+ projects across approximately 40 states, installing over 10 million square feet of constructed wetlands. He explained that the technology originated from research at the Max Planck Institute in Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, was patented in 1972, and has been continually refined since.

Scott Davis explained the operational benefits of reed beds:

- The systems reduce biosolid volume by 90-95% over a 10-year period through dewatering and mineralization of organic components
- Multiple beds (typically 6-9) are used to ensure even distribution and allow for rotation during cleanout
- Plants create pathways for drainage and transpire water, enabling more frequent sludge application than conventional drying beds
- Cold climates like Wisconsin actually benefit from the freeze-thaw action which enhances dewatering
- The systems can handle thicker sludge (2-3.7% solids) but may work better with slightly less polymer usage

When asked about specific requirements for Sister Bay, Scott Davis confirmed that McMahon's estimate of approximately one acre (44,000 square feet) for reed beds would be sufficient for Sister

Bay alone, with additional area (about 63-64,000 square feet total) if including other municipalities. The preliminary plan included 6 beds for Sister Bay and 3 additional beds for other communities. Committee members asked several questions:

- Bhirdo inquired about the configuration of multiple beds versus one large bed, with Scott Davis explaining that multiple beds allow for better management and phased cleanout
- Bell asked about leak prevention, with Scott Davis confirming the systems use 40 mil polypropylene liners with no history of leaks
- Bell also asked about alternatives to burning the reeds during maintenance, with Davis explaining that cutting and composting the reeds on site is a common alternative
- Bhirdo asked about ammonia concerns, with Davis clarifying that Sister Bay's aerobic treatment process already addresses ammonia issues before the biosolids reach the reed beds

The committee discussed potentially visiting Egg Harbor's reed bed installation for a firsthand look at the technology, particularly after the April election when new utility committee members would be in place.

b. Hwy-57 Trail-Utilities Infrastructure Discussion

Barnes presented plans for water and sewer infrastructure along Highway 57. The original plan had scheduled installation in two phases - the northern portion in 2026 and the southern portion with a lift station in 2027. However, with the trail installation potentially happening in fall 2027, there was an opportunity to complete both phases before trail construction.

Barnes explained that the total project cost would be approximately \$921,633 for the pipe installation plus an estimated \$1-3 million for the lift station. The project would service several properties along the highway, including both developed and undeveloped parcels.

Barnes noted that property owners would be required to connect to utilities once they abut their property, and that assessments for undeveloped properties could be deferred until development occurs or the property is sold. The assessment would include interest on the unpaid balance.

Bhirdo questioned the total project cost, noting she thought it was a \$4 million project. Barnes clarified that the lift station represents a significant portion of the total cost.

Bell inquired about coordination with trail construction, asking if utilities and trail work could be done simultaneously to save costs. Staff explained that while theoretically possible, different funding requirements, bidding processes, and construction timelines make perfect coordination challenging, though they would attempt to minimize disruption.

Committee members generally supported moving forward with the accelerated timeline to complete both phases before trail construction, noting that this would open more opportunities for development and create a water main loop in the future.

Motion by Bell, second by Harff, to refer the Highway 57 utilities infrastructure project to the Finance Committee. Motion carried - all ayes.

c. Revised Land Lease Discussion

Barnes presented an updated land lease agreement for the prior land spreading site, incorporating the committee's previous recommendation to reduce the annual payment to \$300. The committee discussed additional terms to include in the lease:

- Committee members emphasized that corn should not be allowed to be planted on the property
- The committee discussed whether to add a CPI escalator to the lease amount, ultimately deciding to add the lease fee to the village's fee schedule for annual review
- Barnes suggested specifying the land be used for hay production only, which would address concerns about corn planting and simplify other restrictions

The committee directed staff to update the lease agreement to specify hay production only and to add the lease fee to the village's fee schedule for annual review.

d. Wastewater Treatment Plant Operations Report

The Utilities Director, Megan Barnes provided a brief operations update:

- Staff had been addressing numerous frozen services during the recent cold snap
- Sludge hauling was reduced from 480,000 gallons the previous year to 400,000 gallons this year
- Changes to the polymer concentration in the sludge concentrator improved solids concentration to 3.7%
- Operational changes in routing influent through the flow equalization basin provided more hydraulic retention time, enabling biological phosphorus removal and reducing chemical usage
- Well rehabilitation has begun on well 1, with an expected two-week timeframe
- There are 16 well permit renewals this year
- The Eagle Mechanical water and sewer extension has been completed, with televising to be done in spring

Bell inquired about a property owner's complaint related to the Eagle Mechanical project. Barnes explained that trees had been damaged and soil pushed onto a property during construction, but arrangements have been made with the contractor to replace trees and properly grade the area in spring.

7. Matters to be placed on a future agenda or referred to a committee, official, or employee

The committee agreed to hold a meeting next month to discuss and make a recommendation regarding the sludge management options presented (dryer system and reed beds).

8. Adjournment

Motion by Bell, second by Harff, to adjourn at 2:50 PM. Motion carried - all ayes.

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Bertges, Administrative Assistant.